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News Release



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Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge Provides Economic Benefits Today, Conservation Benefits for Future Generations

Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), just one of the refuges in the San Diego NWR Complex, generated \$2,221,100 in total economic activity related to refuge recreational use and 18 jobs for the nearby community, according to Banking on Nature 2004: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation. The same report, issued during National Wildlife Refuge Week, found that national wildlife refuges are major economic engines for communities, putting almost \$1.4 billion into the economy.

Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge generated \$8.79 for every dollar received for the refuge's operations and maintenance last fiscal year. Nationally, the \$1.4 billion in total economic activity related to national wildlife refuge recreational use is nearly four times the \$391 million that the Refuge System received in fiscal year 2004 for operations and maintenance.

Moreover, the National Wildlife Refuge System created nearly 24,000 private sector jobs as the \$1.4 billion flowed through the economy, generating about \$454 million in employment income. Additionally, recreational spending on national wildlife refuges generated nearly \$151 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state and federal level.

The national report details findings from 93 national wildlife refuges, including Tijuana Slough. The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses nearly 100 million acres and 545 national wildlife refuges. The Banking on Nature 2004 study included money spent for food and refreshments, lodging at motels, cabins, lodges or campgrounds, and transportation when it calculated the total economic activity related to refuge recreational use.

Tijuana Slough NWR had 65,000 visitors in 2004. All recreation visits were for non-consumptive activities. About 76 percent of recreation visits were undertaken by area residents.

"We're proud of the role played by the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge in strengthening the health and well-being of the community. We not only provide an economic benefit for residents today, but national wildlife



refuges also ensure that future generations will enjoy the precious natural resources that are the foundation of our life and our heritage,” said Assistant Refuge Manager, Tom Pokalski. “We invite everyone to visit our refuges often to learn about our wildlife and enjoy our outdoor recreation programs.”

The Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge in Imperial Beach, CA is the only coastal estuary in southern California without a road or rail line bisecting its marsh. Over 370 species of birds have been recorded on the refuge, so it is a great place for birdwatching or taking a walk along 4 miles of trails. On a walk to the river, you might see one of the refuge’s endangered birds like the California Least Tern, Least Bell's Vireo, or perhaps a few hundred California Brown Pelicans. At the edges of the marsh, the most endangered bird of California’s coastal marshes, the Light-footed Clapper Rail, may surprise you, or you may see an endangered plant called Salt Marsh Bird's Beak in bloom.

"The Tijuana Slough is a wonderful place to spend a day outdoors, or to volunteer for one of its environmental education activities either as an Estuary volunteer or as a member of the Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges. Because the Refuge is part of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, we have many interesting programs provided by both refuge staff and our partner, California State Parks. I am proud to volunteer my time to support the refuge and love bringing my grandchildren for the Estuary’s walks and programs,” said Susan Fuller, a resident of Imperial Beach and past president of the Friends of San Diego Refuges.

In celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week and National Estuaries Day, the Tijuana Slough NWR and California State Parks will host the **Fiesta del Rio** on Saturday, October 8, 2005 at the Pier Plaza in Imperial Beach from Noon to 4:00 p.m. Visitors can experience live stories, music, dance, and the drama of the different cultures that once lived near the Tijuana River Estuary. Children’s activities include games from the past and present, crafts and a local student production of the adorable play, “Go Fish!” At 3:00 p.m., enjoy special guest Dr. Zoolittle and the San Diego Zoo’s “Disappearing Wildlife” audience participation presentation. Our many San Diego partners in conservation - San Diego Zoo, San Diego Natural History Museum, San Diego Audubon, Wildcoast, Chula Vista Nature Center, Endangered Habitats League, and others will all have booths at the event. In addition, Kumeyaay basket and pottery makers from Ensenada, Mexico will present their original crafts for sale. For more information about San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex programs and a schedule of events, please go to: <http://sandiegorefuges.fws.gov>.

For more information about Refuges in the Pacific Region, go to <http://pacific.fws.gov>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.